

VZCZCXYZ0000
OO RUEHWEB

DE RUEHKT #1262 1371019
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
O 171019Z MAY 06
FM AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1488
INFO RUEHB/AMEMBASSY BEIJING PRIORITY 4354
RUEHLM/AMEMBASSY COLOMBO PRIORITY 4609
RUEHKA/AMEMBASSY DHAKA PRIORITY 9713
RUEHIL/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD PRIORITY 2596
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY 4006
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI PRIORITY 9736
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO PRIORITY 0882
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC PRIORITY
RHHMUNA/CDR USPACOM HONOLULU HI PRIORITY
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC PRIORITY
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L KATHMANDU 001262

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR SCA/INS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/17/2016

TAGS: PGOV PTER NP

SUBJECT: PROTESTORS CALL FOR CIVILAN CONTROL OF MILITARY

REF: KATHMANDU

Classified By: Ambassador James F. Moriarty. Reasons 1.4 (b,d).

Demonstrators Against Royal Control of Military

¶1. (U) Thousands of demonstrators took to the streets of Kathmandu on May 16 to protest the House of Representatives' delay in announcing a proclamation to bring all political and military powers under the Parliament. The expected proclamation was delayed because seven party alliance leaders were divided over key points, including who would be Supreme-Commander-in-Chief of the Royal Nepalese Army. The demonstrators, mostly youth, set fire to at least five government and two private vehicles, burned tires on the streets, put stones and logs on the main roads throughout Kathmandu to block traffic, and staged a protest in front of the Parliament building compound. The demonstrations continued on May 17, but were smaller and more peaceful.

¶2. (U) Demonstrators also shouted slogans against Nepali Congress-Democratic President Sher Bahadur Deuba for his supposed statement endorsing the King's remaining in some capacity as "Commander in Chief" of the army. Deuba denied making such a statement, telling the media it was "unimaginable" for him to do so.

Unclear Who Organized the Demonstrations

¶3. (C) Prime Minister G.P. Koirala told the Ambassador on May 17 that he did not know who organized the demonstrations. Koirala thought that demonstrators "could be Maoists, or mandalay" (a term for Panchayat era hooligans who tried to create anarchy, but now usually meaning pro-royalist toughs). According to Embassy sources, the protests were well organized. Protesters arrived in buses, used trucks to block the Ring Road, and brought petrol bottles to set fire to vehicles to block a major bridge in Kathmandu. Local NGO INSEC told Emboff that they were unable to determine the identity of those organizing the protests, but noted that thousands of people spontaneously joined the demonstrations.

Maoists Deny Responsibility

¶4. (SBU) Prabhakiran of the Valley Bureau Office of the CPN-Maoist issued a press statement on May 16 denying Maoist involvement in the demonstrations, saying "the party had no protest program in the valley today." "The acts of vandalism and arson were deliberately committed by some reactionary forces to tarnish the image of our party," the statement continued. However, most Kathmandu residents viewed that statement with some skepticism.

Comment

¶5. (C) If the May 16 demonstrations were organized by the Maoists, they were designed to remind the government and the people that the insurgents can now cause trouble at will inside Kathmandu. The rapid denial by the Maoist Commander appears an attempt to attach some deniability -- however implausible -- to the incident.

MORIARTY